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## SOCIAL CONTROL.<sup>1</sup> VII.

### ASSEMBLAGE.

#### I.

Two methods of molding the feelings to social conduct and endeavor have been pointed out—*religion* and *ideals*. A third way is *assemblage*.

As this series of studies goes on it becomes plain to the writer that the study of social control needs to be prefaced by a study of the spontaneous influences that socialize men. Prior to *cultivated* goodness should be considered *natural* goodness, both that which comes from inborn power of sympathy and that which springs up from men having their lives much in common. Before describing the methods of forcing or cultivation by which, in the orderly social garden, the human plant is caused to bring forth abundant fruits of righteousness, we should glance at the fruit, mean and meager though it be, which that plant can bring forth in its uncultivated state ere its nurture has become the object of social art.

So doing we should find that, just as the gardener does little else than strengthen, regulate, or apply with system, those forces and elements that cause growth in the natural state, so society makes righteousness to abound chiefly by supplying the natural conditions of goodness. Few of its instruments of control are peculiarly its own; for the most part it strengthens or adapts those fellowship forces that are found at work in any group of human beings. Thus the restraints of law, public opinion, and social suggestion have their prototypes in individual vengeance, resentment, and suggestion. Religion which society uses to call forth fellow feeling was originally the mystic interpretation of a

<sup>1</sup> Errata for No. VI in January issue of JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY. In note to p. 554, for "History of" read "Studies in." On p. 565, line 2, omit "not." On p. 566, line 6, for "sociology" read "sociality."

fellow feeling already existing. Ideals, I shall sometime show, begin in the propitiation between man and man.

As natural promoters of altruism we may distinguish language, likeness, presence, companionship, imitation, play, social pleasure, mutual aid, community of interests and feelings, comprehension and intelligence. Of these *presence* is not the least. There is no doubt that being together is essential to the natural development of interest in and love for others. Contact and dealings favor that power of putting one's self in another's place, that interpenetration of consciousnesses, which is the native soil of good conduct. Sociability is the forerunner of sociality. The enemy is the stranger, the friend is the housemate, and *kindness*, as the word itself hints, is the feeling that grows up among kindred. Whatever be the pitch of self-devotion that may be reached by the proud and lonely soul dwelling apart with its ideals, it is certain that early altruism was concrete, and meant regard for known people, for intimates and fellows.

When the camp or village is the social unit the natural occasions of meeting suffice. But when the conditions of getting a living scatter people, or when one society includes many bands or settlements, the meetings will be too few to keep alive the flame of interest or regard. The sense of being knit up in a common life fades when paths lie too much apart. Differentiation sets in, local peculiarities spring up, and unlikeness, rather than likeness, prevails. In time estrangement supervenes and the society falls apart into its component clusters. It is to avoid this disintegration that *institutions of assemblage* are developed and maintained in the larger societies.

The value of assemblage in the way of social control is the sense of unity it is able to inspire. In mere contact there is no virtue, for contact is quite as apt to breed antagonism as liking. Nor is social intercourse the main thing. This presupposes liking, and, moreover, cannot operate on so vast a scale as to bring a man into closer relations with some thousands of his fellows. The efficacy of assemblage lies in this: that many indi-

viduals in each other's presence are brought to have the same feeling at the same moment, *and to perceive this identity of feeling*. With this perceived convergence of sentiment the hostility, distrust, or indifference that accompanies strangeness fades away; the sense of separateness is blunted, and the consciousness of kind becomes more vivid. The self, which is not, as metaphysicians fancy, a mathematical point, but a sphere of varying diameter, is enlarged. In Professor Patten's happy phrase it becomes "synthetic." The ordinary round of feelings is broken in upon, and more of the man comes to reside outside of himself, his family, or his neighborhood.

There is needed a master emotion that shall orient the minds of all assembled in one direction. This may be love or hate, rapture or reverence, defiance or admiration. Its object may be a god, a hero, an event, or another people. *What* it is is not so important as that it be powerful and common to many. When many participate in the same emotion at the same moment, and each is aware of this participation, we get three effects: (1) The emotion spreads by contagion till the unanimity is perfect; (2) the feeling is intensified in each because shared by all; (3) the unison perceived inspires a sympathy that may survive the original emotion.

When the assembly is broken up and its members are again scattered, the disintegrating forces resume their work. Slowly the newly formed bond relaxes, the recent cement ceases to bind, antagonisms reappear, and the self contracts. Then the sense of a common life must be renewed again in the same way. Hence assemblage in order to meet the needs of society must be *periodical*.

The *raison d'être* of the periodical assemblage is its power to harmonize. But this supplies no motive to the individual. He cares nothing for spiritual enlargement. He will make no pilgrimage at heavy expense in order to have his sympathies quickened. To him, therefore, the feast wears a different aspect. It comes at a natural season of festivity—harvest or vintage. It is to him an occasion of feasting, dancing, and merrymaking,

where customary restraints are laid aside and license prevails, where caste lines are broken down and fellowship reigns. To get him to come, all manner of attractions will be provided for him. Dignitaries and rulers usually invisible to the multitude will show themselves, processions will march, pomps and pageants can be seen. If the assemblage is religious, mysteries are unveiled, wonders are promised, the blessings of the gods will descend, and benefits, both public and private, will be reaped. The private gratifications afforded will, therefore, seem fully able to account for the festival, and no other end will be thought of. The social meaning of it will be unacknowledged and unapparent.

## II.

How much light can this interpretation throw on history?

It is likely that many assemblages we have looked upon as meetings for social pleasure should be regarded in this light. Among hunting peoples, when the tribe has to scatter, or when confederation takes place, the regular festivals and dances that reunite the members of the tribe on one spot probably have this function. The eating together that characterizes early assemblage, aside from the mystic bond established between commonsals, favors an expansive and fraternal frame of mind. Even to the present day eating or drinking together is everywhere the source of fellowship and the seal of amity. Hence, also, the deliberate intoxication on such occasions. Well does Professor Giddings say: "Deplorable as are the consequences of both gambling and drunkenness, the truthful scientific observer is forced to admit that in the early stages of social development these vices have served a useful function . . . ."<sup>1</sup>

That the unit for feasting should so often be larger than the unit for coöperation may be due to the peculiar socializing power of festivity. People can get along together under festal excitement who cannot bring themselves to work together. Joint festivity, therefore, often keeps the way open for mutual

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Sociology*, pp. 119, 120.

aid in conflict and pioneers the way for economic coöperation. Those who regard these festivals as spontaneous gatherings for merrymaking must be at a loss to account for their scope and regularity. Why, if they have no deeper social meaning, should they bring together people from such a distance and at such regular intervals. They seem akin rather to those formal celebrations that among primitive people mark the close of hostilities, the conclusion of a treaty, or the forming of an alliance.

But it is inevitable that assemblage directed to public and not to private ends should in time lose somewhat the aspect of spontaneity that befits gatherings for mere hilarity, and become more religious. Like all those early institutions that have in charge far-reaching common interests, they will seek to establish themselves not on the shifting inclinations but on the rooted beliefs of men. The core of assemblage, therefore, becomes *worship*.

Hitherto worship has not been accounted for as a social institution. The religious gathering before the days of faiths that had a message to deliver was certainly not educational. "The antique religions had for the most part no creed; they consisted entirely of institutions and practices."<sup>1</sup> Here, then, where there is no appeal to ethical feelings, no moral teaching, and no service calling up tender sentiments, what social value is there? What utility had those innumerable cults of the ages before morality, when religion was rite, not belief or conduct or aspiration? They would seem to be so much burning of flesh, so much waste of good oil and wine, so much time, trouble, and expense, all to propitiate gods that are phantoms! Sacrifices to the senseless flame, libations to the indifferent ground, and invocations to the unlistening air—how useless! And so all this segment of ancient life has no place in social development, but is mere aberration and delusion!

It would indeed be a marvel if institutions of worship so carefully perfected and so enduring have no real function in the economy of society. All things human tend to "sag" unless

<sup>1</sup> ROBERTSON SMITH, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 18.

they have a basis in reality. Domestic arrangements, political institutions, and professional customs last, in the long run, because of their usefulness. Is it likely that feasts and cults should prove an exception to this rule?<sup>1</sup>

The true meaning of public worship has been well stated by Tarde: "What is a fête? It is that sovereign process by which the social logic of the sentiments overrules and resolves all partial discords, private enmities, envies, contempts, jealousies, moral oppositions of all sorts into an immense unison formed by the periodical convergence of all these secondary sentiments into a greater and stronger sentiment of collective hate or love for some great object which gives the tone to all hearts and transfigures their dissonances into a higher harmony."<sup>2</sup>

This interpretation accounts for certain peculiar features of worship. Why else should worship be so universally *public*? "The sacrificial meal had preëminently the character of the public feast."<sup>3</sup> "The ordinary type of Hebrew worship was essentially social, for in antiquity all religion was an affair of the community rather than of the individual."<sup>4</sup> "Every complete act of worship—for a mere vow was not complete till it was fulfilled by presenting a sacrifice—had a public or quasi-public character. Most sacrifices were offered on fixed occasions, at the great communal or national feasts, but even a private offering was not complete without guests."<sup>5</sup> Private worship, far from being the prototype, is the parody of public worship. "All over the world these private cults are modeled on, derived from, and later than the established worship of the gods of the community."<sup>6</sup> "Ancestor worship is steadily assimilated in form, in its rites and ceremonies, to the public worship of the gods."<sup>7</sup>

Why, if worship be mere propitiation, should *emotional stress*

<sup>1</sup> For a striking instance of how apparently meaningless observances disclose to the sage observer the hidden utility that keeps them alive, see "Bhowani, the Cholera Goddess" in the *Nineteenth Century* for October 1896.

<sup>2</sup> *La logique sociale*, p. 325.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> *Religion of the Semites*, p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>6</sup> JEVONS, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

be so marked? "The most important functions of ancient worship were reserved for public occasions, when the whole community was stirred by a common emotion."<sup>1</sup> "Universal hilarity prevailed; men ate, drank, and were merry together, rejoicing before their god."<sup>2</sup> Feasting, dancing, song, and music were present.<sup>3</sup> We read of "orgiastic gladness," "intoxication of the senses," "physical excitement of religion," and "hilarious revelry" as characterizing the later religious gatherings in contrast with the natural exhilaration of the primitive feasts. In these features we see that emotional stress and mutual hypnotism which leads to mob mind, the acme of collective consciousness.

To our glib rationalism it seems childish to connect national prosperity with national worship. But look below the surface. In the early expansion of society many of the forces that unite the scattered members of a modern state are wanting. A people without letters, arts, or trade, living in scattered agricultural communities, without communication, movement, or central authority, has little to keep alive mutual interest. The ties created by education, travel, intercourse, trade, news, common literature and central administration are unknown. Were it not for the far reverberation of those periodical feasts where a common emotion lifts the people to a common consciousness, the society would surely crumble.

With the religion of doctrine and precept assemblage comes to have a value for instruction, but its old virtue does not cease. The weekly union of the Christian community in a service fitted to give a common direction to all thoughts and to call forth strong emotions must have been a precious "social filament" in the Dark Ages, and even now, when the occasions for assemblage have so multiplied, it plays no mean part in moral education.

It is perhaps an instinctive recognition of this, as much as

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of the Semites*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> DYER, *The Gods of Greece*, p. 103. See also BANCROFT, *Native Races*, Vol. II, chapters ix and xxii.



mere impatience with nonconformity, that has attached to churchgoing an unmistakable social sanction. It is vaguely felt that worship is a social tie, and that the average man cannot neglect it without loss of fraternal feeling. Though now the efficacy of private devotion is acknowledged, and though the best religious thought is no longer to be got from sermons, there seems little disposition to let religion become merely a private and home affair. No sect, however high its conception of deity, neglects frequent assemblage ostensibly for worship. May there not be here an intimation that, however much the theory of religion may change, religious association and religious gatherings will continue to play a prominent part in the life of society?<sup>1</sup>

When religion, ceasing to be national, becomes universal, it no longer avails to preserve the special solidarity needed in the political group. Hence the institution of the patriotic festival to supplement the religious festival. It is significant that none of the modern secular states has neglected to provide national holidays giving occasion for assemblage. While the memories of national dangers, struggles, and triumphs revived at such meetings give them a peculiar value, it is not to be doubted that the spectacle of innumerable simultaneous gatherings of one's fellow citizens dominated by a single sentiment is of itself able to thrill the soul with a sense of the common life.

But while here and there we can detect society promoting assemblage for the sake of its harmonizing effect, it is certain that this form of control is on the wane. Though the diameter of societies lengthens, the means of communication and meeting grow still faster. The intellectual and emotional contacts of men are become so numerous that it is no longer lack of comprehension that threatens the permanence of the social order. The natural occasions for meeting are now so many that it is not necessary for society to supply artificial occasions. It is

<sup>1</sup> Ominous, however, is the increasing resort to "attractive" features in order to get people to assemble. See "Another Year of Church Entertainments," by W. B. Hale in *Forum* for December 1896.

not the estrangement that grows up between the different local groups in a society that is nowadays to be provided against, but rather a certain attitude of the individual toward the *impersonal* arrangements and institutions by which he is surrounded.

#### CEREMONY.

##### I.

To many the nature of ceremonial control will seem too well set forth by Mr. Spencer to be in need of any restatement. In truth, however, his "ceremonial government" is not a *means* of government, but a *kind* of government. With him obeisances and respects are the pale shadow of social, political, or religious subordination. They are not means of winning ascendancy, but the sign and symptom of ascendancy already won. However indebted is sociology to Mr. Spencer for tracing the derivation of ceremonies from natural acts of propitiation, it is now necessary to supplement his study of forms by a study of motives and effects. If it can be shown that a ceremony is not only a social practice but also a social institution, and that it is not simply a *control*, but that it is a *means of control* whereby society can impress the feelings of individuals advantageously to itself, the reopening of this subject will be justified.

##### II.

Two views may be taken of the forms observed in intercourse. From one standpoint the essence of ceremony is *propitiation*. The force impelling people to these tiresome and precise actions is *fear*. The practice is adopted by the inferior either as the instinctive expression of submission or because such signs of subordination will please and mollify the superior. These formalities, then, observed from purely private motives, mark the militant state of society with its numerous personal and class ascendancies. When the leveling influences of the industrial state cause the government of one man by another to disappear, they become rarer. Ceremony, therefore,

does not approach the dignity of a social institution playing some part in the life of society. It is a procedure generalized by imitation, but no more significant in the social economy than are those uniformities called fashion, and deemed by Mr. Spencer to be of a kind with ceremony.

Significant details, however, suggest another point of view. Often formality does not proceed from the inferior, but from the would-be superior. Ceremoniousness is, we know, well suited to curb over-familiarity and keep others at a distance. There are forms characterized by obsequiousness, but there are other forms which are, so to speak, the weapons by which one man subdues another. "Amongst a man's peers," says Bacon, "a man shall be sure of familiarity; and therefore it is good a little to keep state."<sup>1</sup> "In early society," says Bagehot, "a dignified manner is of essential importance . . . ." "The habitual ascendancy of grave manner was a primary force in winning and calming mankind."<sup>2</sup> Everywhere we must distinguish from the ascendancy gained by force the ascendancy gained by demeanor. The obedience due to awe was no less real than the obedience due to fear. The stately bearing no less than the strong arm was a means of control in early society.

But why should demeanor give one man the upper hand of another? It is likely that the soul of manner is to show forth a sense of confidence and power. This suggests a respect for one's own person, doings, or opinions which powerfully affects the minds of beholders. For there is no reason why this state of mind should not as readily pass from one to another in way of imitation as any other feeling or judgment. The man of impressive manner simply reiterates in gesture language his high sense of his own worth till others are irresistibly led to share it.

Formality in personal intercourse, then, can be traced down to two roots—servility and self-respect. These feelings, working in the sphere of human contacts, give rise to two contrasted efforts—the effort of the servile to control others by propitia-

<sup>1</sup>"Of Ceremonies and Respects."

<sup>2</sup>*Physics and Politics*, p. 151.

ting them, and the effort of the self-respecting to control others by impressing them. These, if successful, inspire graciousness in the one case and deference in the other.

Undoubtedly the forms that become stereotyped are those originally used to propitiate. But it would be rash to conclude that ceremony is an endeavor at mutual propitiation. Nothing is more certain than that manners, far from growing up spontaneously, early get the social sanction behind them and are forced into vogue. Propriety gets codified as soon as morality. Society, far from letting alone, actively interferes in order to get certain forms observed by men in their intercourse. Children are taught them, art lauds them, religion endorses them, and in every way society behaves as if its interests were bound up with them.

Would it be safe to infer that society is concerned in propagating a system of mutual propitiation tending to develop graciousness? Manifestly not, for such a sentiment is of little use to it. On the other hand, nothing could more conduce to social order, with its equilibrium of interests and balance of activities, than a respect of each for others. And forms of intercourse that exert a mutual restraint, and cause each to set a value upon the personality of another, will very likely win the support of society. Of the stiff manners of the Colonials Dr. Eggleston says: "Perhaps it was the partial default of refined feeling that made stately and ceremonious manners seem so proper to the upper class of that day; such usages were a fence by which society protected itself against itself."<sup>1</sup> How well this tallies with the saying of Confucius: "The ceremonial usages serve as dykes to the people against bad excesses to which they are prone."

The society that has relied most on ceremony to preserve order and harmonize men in their dealings is China. Let us see what virtue is found in it by the sages who helped to frame that wonderful and enduring fabric. "They [ceremonies] are the bond that holds the multitude together; and if the bond be

<sup>1</sup> "Social Life in the Colonies," *Century*, Vol. XXX, p. 391.

removed, those multitudes fall into confusion.”<sup>1</sup> “For securing the repose of superiors and the good order of the people, there is nothing better than the Rules of Propriety. The Rules of Propriety are simply the development of the principle of reverence.”<sup>2</sup> “The sages knew that the rules of ceremony could not be dispensed with, while the ruin of states, the destruction of families, and the perishing of individuals are always preceded by the abandonment of the Rules of Propriety.”<sup>3</sup>

“Therefore the sage kings cultivated and fashioned the lever of righteousness and the ordering of ceremonial usages, in order to regulate the feelings of men. These feelings were the field to be cultivated by the sage kings. They fashioned the rules of ceremony to plow it. They set forth the principles of righteousness with which to plant it.”<sup>4</sup>

We find men beginning with no ceremonious forms in personal intercourse, then developing them into a luxuriance so great as almost to smother social life, and finally allowing them to lapse almost to disappearance. Is this but the shadow of that personal ascendancy, which, starting at zero, rose to its zenith in the military state, and now sinks again towards zero? Or does this *crescendo* and *diminuendo* not indicate rather that society finding ceremony efficacious used it in controlling men in their dealings with one another until the coming to hand of new and finer modes of control enabled it increasingly to dispense with an instrument so clumsy? Even Mr. Spencer confesses that “established observances have the function of educating, in respect of its minor actions, the anti-social nature into a form fitted for social life.”<sup>5</sup>

This interpretation accords with numerous facts. Prescribed forms are not used in the family or between intimates, where affection insures self-restraint. But as distance increases the sway of formality grows, till it reaches its climax in the inter-

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, Li Ki, bk. viii, § i.

<sup>2</sup> Hsiao King, chap. xii in Vol. III, *Sacred Books of the East*.

<sup>3</sup> Li Ki, bk. vii, § iv, par. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ceremonial Institutions*, § 431.

course of belligerents or the negotiations of ambassadors. It flourishes in militant societies, but not solely as suggested by the obsequiousness of inferiors. It is most observed by the members of a military class, and by those who command rather than by those who obey. In caste societies, while the lower orders may practice humble obeisances, it is in the highest caste that ceremony grows most rankly. The forms of politeness have passed from above downwards and not from below upwards. The courtesy of chivalry was for warriors, not for burghers. It is noble or courtier, not peasant, that feels most the yoke of etiquette. In other words, wherever place or pursuit has fostered excessive self-assertion, there society imposes its rules of behavior designed to check arrogance and suggest the sacredness of another's personality.

But why does society later allow this code to lapse? Is it, as Mr. Spencer asserts, due to the increase of sympathy and social feeling? Partly, but not wholly. While granting that industrialism develops a pacific temper that does not need a rigid ceremonial discipline, let us not overlook the finer type of control that has come in. What now curbs men in their intercourse is not formality, but idea. Ideas of "human dignity," "equality before God," "divine sonship," "value of the undying soul," etc., which saturate the culture we are bathed in till everyone is more or less affected by them, are the moderating influences of today. These notions, partly implicit in Christianity, partly drawn from Greek thought at the Renaissance, and partly struck out by the humanitarian idealism of the last two centuries, inspire in us that reverence for the personality of another which in Persia, Arabia, or China was bound up with ceremonial observance.

### III.

Passing now from the ceremony of intercourse to the ceremony of occasions<sup>1</sup> new problems appear. It is a feature of

<sup>1</sup>On this topic I am glad to acknowledge valuable help from an able paper on Ceremony by a student of mine, Mr. B. M. Palmer.

early society that all important occasions in the life of the individual are solemnized by the public performance of rites. The great mass of these are probably intended to impress rather than to control. The formalities connected with the transfer of real estate, the contracting and paying of debts, the making of wills, marriage, adoption, disinheritance, succession, the emancipation of slaves, etc, suited as they are to make vivid and lasting impressions on the minds of witnesses, are necessary to authenticate transactions in days before document and record were possible. They call attention to the fact that something important is taking place, and by their mysterious and unusual character grave deeply on the memory of spectators that which now we trust to deed and note and register.<sup>1</sup>

But in many cases the ceremony of occasion is something more than means of record. We find that the occasions most scrupulously accentuated by public formalities are just those which mark a change in the relations of the individual which involves the acceptance of new responsibilities. The recognition of a new-born child, the attainment of manhood or womanhood, the coming of age, the inheritance of family property, the succession to the headship, marriage, adoption, initiation, confirmation, naturalization, the promise of allegiance, enlistment, installation in office, ordination, compact and treaty—these, though they are events of very different importance, have this in common, that they bind somebody to do for others, for his family, or for the group at large, what hitherto has not been laid upon him. Sometimes, as at christening or enlistment, the obligation is one-sided; sometimes, as in marriage or adoption, it is mutual upon two parties; and again, as in baptism, ordination, or coronation, it embraces the beholding public.

On the other hand, when obligation narrows instead of widens, the event, though certainly as important, is not signal-

<sup>1</sup>Of the Sumatran *bimbangs*, or noisy public festivals, we read: "To give authority to their contracts and other deeds, whether of a public or a private nature, they always make one of these feasts. Writing, they say, may be altered or counterfeited, but the memory of what is transacted and concluded in the presence of a thousand witnesses must remain sacred."

ized by ceremony. Thus divorce is less formal than marriage, withdrawal from association or church than initiation or confirmation, expatriation than naturalization, mustering out of service than enlistment, the adjournment of court than its opening. By the gateway of ceremony is the *entrance* to duties, not the *exit* from them. Is it not, therefore, clear that rite marks not all changes in status, but chiefly those which involve fresh obligations?

Why should this be unless ceremony promotes a performance of these obligations—is, in other words, *a means of control*? Note that it is *symbolic*. The picturesque, dramatic, or sensational would serve to impress an event upon the memory. But the ceremony that modifies the feelings is full of meaning. It calls up that which would be overlooked, reminds of that which would be forgotten, and so reveals the full significance of what is being done. Thus in marriage the carrying away of the bride, the pretended payment for her, the “giving” her away, her whipping by the groom, etc., are ways of signifying that the girl’s allegiance to her family has ceased. The *confarreatio*, the drinking together of *sakè*, the joining of hand, the exchange of bracelets, the tying together of garments symbolize the intimacy of the new relation. The service of ceremony, therefore, consists in so stimulating the imagination by appropriate gestures, actions, and words as to call up the conception of something vaster in power, life, or numbers than the here and now — God, society, the dead or the unborn.

Again, ceremony is *solemn*; this, not in order to be remembered, but in order to leave a moral impress. A coronation or a knighting is a miniature drama intended to produce an effect upon the feelings of the principals or spectators. Anything in the way of abridgment or disturbance or interruption or caprice would break the spell and destroy the value of the whole. Hence ceremonies must be guarded from distracting sights or sounds, the parts must be arranged beforehand, the details must be precise, and the minutiae must be so archaic as to be “taboo” to the inroads of a critical rationalism.



Just as proverbs lose their value because of the growing variety of judgment upon life, so ceremonies lose their impressiveness because of the growing diversity of taste. When the lines of individual development are so divergent that there is no form or rite that affects all in the same way—when that which moves one is meaningless to another and ridiculous to a third—the age of symbol is over. The building up of a complex culture and the intellectual differentiation that goes on in society ushers in the era of speech-making. As language presupposes no such agreement of taste and imagination as does the symbol, the occasion once signalized by ceremony is now marked by the oration.

But the appeal that leans so much on reason cannot be sure of sweeping away reason in a tide of sentiment. We must recognize that the age of ceremony is nearly over and we have nothing so effective to put in its place. It behooves society, therefore, to guard with care the little valuable ceremony yet remaining to it in church sacraments or public inaugurations. Ceremonies are not exposed so much to disintegration as beliefs, but still they suffer in a critical, rationalistic age like the present, that cannot divine their virtue. And what is lost is not replaced. It is as hard for a sophisticated age to make new ceremony as to make new myths or new epics. We Americans, with our detachment from the past, our reliance upon the rational, and our hypertrophied sense of the ridiculous, have little ceremony left, but that little we should keep, for it has been well winnowed by time.

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